

A star behind the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix stars

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23/04/2020 Calm heroes are needed behind the scenes so that the players can shine in Porsche Tennis Grand Prix's spotlight – people like Rüdiger Munkelt.

Rüdiger Munkelt only really broke sweat once. It was back in 1989 after the Davis Cup final between Germany and Sweden when the euphoria after Becker and Co's win also seized his team stalling work to dismantle the stands. Waiting impatiently at the door were Udo Jürgens' roadies wanting to turn the Centre Court in the Hanns Martin Schleyer Halle into a stage for the highly popular Austrian singer – but Rüdiger Munkelt solved the problem and Udo Jürgens was able to start on time.

As a project manager for the in.Stuttgart Veranstaltungsgesellschaft, the event company of the city of Stuttgart, he has been responsible for providing the perfect stage for artistes and athletes for 25 years – and he knows every nook and cranny in both the Porsche Arena and the Hanns Martin Schleyer Halle,

the two biggest event venues in Stuttgart's NeckarPark complex. One of his biggest challenges was the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix's successful move from Filderstadt to the newly built Porsche Arena in 2006. A mammoth task. Even if many things had become routine over the years, the long-running tournament never allowed one to sit back. "When it comes to such a complex event, you have to stay ahead of everything, otherwise there's trouble." Construction work before the tournament takes about three weeks and everything has to be dismantled within the space of a few days.

It was good that he always had a special bond to tennis. He once played the game himself, but a sports injury left him only a fan. As such, he had a favourite player – Ana Ivanovic. "She wasn't only great player – she always had a smile on her face and was very friendly to everybody." Otherwise? "Hmm," he chuckles, "she does also look sensational."

He will go into early retirement in August. The fact that his last Porsche Tennis Grand Prix had to be cancelled makes him deeply sorry, especially for the fans. He himself is looking forward to 2021 when he will be sitting in the stands, maybe even watching a whole match without his mobile ringing to ask him to go to some remote corner of the arena. "I'll then be a normal fan," he says. "I'm looking forward to it, and I'm really going to enjoy it."

MEDIA ENQUIRIES



Markus Rothermel

Spokesperson Sports Communications
+49 (0) 170 / 911 0779
markus.rothermel@porsche.de

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